

Dear DIARY

SWEDEN

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>

>

>The size of Sweden

>

>8.9 million inhabitants occupy the fourth largest country in Europe.

If you

>were to swing Sweden round at 180° using the southernmost tip as the axis,

>you could reach central Italy no problem. Mind you, the Sami (Laplanders)

>would want to know what they were suddenly doing in Naples. travel by

>sleeper. This means that not many Swedes know what their country looks like.

>They either fly 10 000 metres above it or sleep through it.

>

>Geography

>

>The southern part of Sweden is the most densely populated and is inhabited

>by people called Scanians, a kind of Swedish-speaking Dane. They are proud

>to tell you that they were once a part of Denmark and that they have

>absolutely nothing in common with the rest of the country. Indeed they are

>geographically closer to Berlin than to Stockholm. The southern part of

>Sweden is the gateway to Europe and the rest of the world. Or at least to

>Copenhagen for a good night out.

>

>The north of Sweden is inhabited by northerners (Norrlänningar) and the Sami

>(Laplanders), an ancient hunting and fishing nomadic people who live in

>tents and speak a Finno-Urgic language they themselves can hardly understand. This is perhaps why they hardly say anything at all.

Norrland,

>as this area is called, stretches across 60% of Sweden and is so sparsely

>populated that the inhabitants hardly ever meet anyone to talk to.

>
>In central Sweden lies the capital, Stockholm. Stockholm is inhabited by
>'zero eights', so called because of their telephone area codes. 'Zero
>eights' have a reputation for being like sea-gulls, they scream and cause a
>mess wherever they go. Well, that's what the Swedish-speaking Danes say in
>the south. The people of the north haven't said a word. As usual.
>
>The Swedish summer
>
>The Swedish summer is the warmest day of the year. And as Sweden is a very
>normal country, it is normal for the Swedish summer to be a bit colder than
>normal.
>
>The Swedish winter
>
>The geography book will tell you that, although the country is on the same
>latitude as Alaska, Sweden has a mild climate and the Atlantic Gulf stream
>gives warm winters. The truth is that there are two types of winter in
>Sweden. A grey one and a white one. Swedes survive the winter only by
>dreaming of what they are going to do on that summer's day.
>
>Sweden - a peace-loving nation
>
>Sweden is a peace-loving country. There is, after all, such a thing as the
>Nobel Peace Prize. Having invented dynamite, gelignite and nitroglycerine,
>and other substances enough to blow the earth out of the solar system, the
>Swede Alfred Nobel got a guilty conscience and used his profits to set up
>the Nobel Foundation.
>
>The Swedes are neutral because they say they are. They are the conscience of
>the world and therefore only sell peaceful weapons. Preferably to be used as
>fireworks.

>
>Europa!
>
>For most Swedes Europe starts on the other side of the Sound in Copenhagen.
>Sweden joined the EU in 1995, although most of them would have preferred the
>EU to join Sweden on their terms. 99% of the Swedes are now soberly against
>the EU as it is no longer possible to buy tax-free spirits and cigarettes
>when travelling from one EU country to another. For, up to now, it has
>always been the duty of every Swede to buy his ration both on the way out
>and on the way back. Once at a hotel in one of Europe's exciting metropolises, Swedes used to gather, lock themselves up in the room and
>drink duty-free booze out of the toothbrush glass. The fact that bar prices
>in Europe are usually considerably lower than even Swedish tax-free prices
>never occurred to them.
>
>Scandinavian neighbors
>
>As Victor Borge, the Danish entertainer, once said. Some things are better
>in Sweden than in Denmark. The Swedes have better neighbors.
>
>Norway is very sparsely inhabited and has an average of three inhabitants per
>mountain. Norway always regarded itself as the little brother of Sweden
>until someone pointed out that if you flattened all the mountains, the
>country would be fifty times larger than its big brother. That and earning
>zillions of crowns from North Sea oil has done wonders to raise Norwegian
>self-esteem.
>
>Swedish politics
>
>Swedes are liberal, yet they always vote for the social democrats. That's

>because they are so conservative. Or, as the well-known saying goes, the
>Swedes are a colorful people. They think blue, vote red and eat green.
>
> Swedish tax
>
>Governments in Sweden have spent years convincing Swedes that their money
>isn't really their own. But the Swede is a person of great initiative and
>has developed a few ways of keeping a few crowns for himself. Nobody is
>allowed to get rich. If people in other countries see someone drive round in
>a flashy sports car, they may exclaim 'Wow! What a cool guy!' In Sweden
>they'll say 'What a tax-dodger'.
>
>Business climate in Sweden
>
>In the USA business people go to their therapist's after a nervous
>breakdown. In Sweden people running their own businesses go to their
>accountant's.
>
>Swedish business culture
>
>Swedish managers want to be normal people and one of the team. That is why
>they like to be called by their first names; Bengan, Maggan, Bosse and Kalle
>by their staff. They never shut their office door and they even queue up in
>the same canteen as the workers and eat the same food. They like to think of
>themselves more as a coach than a commander. Swedish management delegates
>responsibility and authority throughout the organization. Over 80% of Swedes
>have some form of vocational training and staff are therefore quite capable
>of taking initiative and participating in the decision-making. For
>foreigners it's sometimes difficult to know who's in charge around here.

>Lasse in his open-necked, short-sleeved, yellow shirt and white socks
and
>sneakers, doesn't really look the part.
>
> Swedish inventions
>
>Sweden gave the world ball-bearings, safety matches, adjustable
wrenches,
>safety belts, Tetra Paks, Volvo and Saab. It also makes and exports
Absolut
>vodka, which is rather ironic as the Swedish word for teetotalers is
>'Absolutist'. Ikea, of course , is also Swedish. If the social democrats
>created the welfare state, commonly referred to as 'the home of the
people',
>then Ikea furnished it.
>
>Swedish schedules
>
>The Bible of the modern Swede is his filofax. Everything he has to do
for
>the next six months is meticulously written down. Take kids to day
care,
>drop of suit for cleaning, ring dentist, meeting with sales team, fax
>figures, lunch with Bengan, meeting, pick up car, drive home, take
off
>shoes, shout at kids. It's all in there - every movement. All planned
and
>organised down to the very last minute. If a Swede misplaces his
filofax
>then he loses direction in life - he simply does not know what to do
next.
>
>Everything is planned weeks in advance and written down next to
the times it
>has to be performed. Flexibility is not the name of the game here.
Once
>written in, then thy will be done. Swedes are impressed by filofaxes
which
>are full and overflowing. A chock-a-block filofax is a status symbol.
The
>next time you want to arrange a meeting with a Swede, watch how
he
>instinctively reaches for his filofax, opens it in January and flicks
>through week after week, month after month of crammed
appointments finally

>to stop in October some time. Then something will happen. Your Swedish
>business partner will mutter something like 'Is week 37 OK? I can squeeze
>you in in week 38'. Swedes count weeks. Each week has a number. Ask the
>average Swede when week 29 is and he hasn't got a clue. But that gives him
>another excuse to reach for his filofax and start flicking through.
>
>He'll find that it's in July, in the middle of his holiday and therefore he
>couldn't care less what the number of the week is.
>
>000101
>
>Swedes write the date backwards. Year first, then month and then day. Nobody
>says the date that way, but Swedes are sure it's the right way to write it.
>Everybody has a national registration number with ten digits based on the
>date of their birth and a few extra ones, such as 581023-6879. Or as one
>Swede put it "It's the day, month and year when you were born backwards and
>then followed by four figures". Childbirth is a painful business in Sweden.
>
>The Social Swede
>
>Swedish homes
>
>These are usually very tasteful, yet simply furnished. Swedish homes are
>simple, clean and uncluttered. Foreign guests very often ask 'How nice. When
>are you moving in?' Swedes have good taste in furniture and home-decorating.
>Walls are usually painted in a plain colour and the sofa, the carpets, and
>the curtains all match. Indeed, when they entertain at home, even the
>candles match the curtains, which match the table cloth which matches the
>serviettes which often match the hostess's dress.

>
>Invited to dinner - 1
>
>They take the paper off a bunch of flowers before they ring the doorbell of
>their hosts for the evening. It's rather like unwrapping a Christmas present
>before you give it to someone. Nobody ever knows where to put the paper once
>they've screwed it up. Usually the hostess end up taking it. A bunch of
>pretty flowers in one hand and a soggy, screwed up piece of wrapping paper
>in the other.
>
>Invited to dinner - 2
>
>The person sitting next to you at the dinner table will offer you a lump of
>butter on a wooden knife. It is not some ancient superstitious Viking ritual
>whereby the knife has to be passed once round the table. It's quite simply
>the height of politeness to offer your neighbor some butter on a knife. What
>you do if there's not enough butter on the knife or if there is some left
>over, goodness knows. But there's no need to pass it on to the next person
>as he's busy handing butter to someone else.
>
>Invited to dinner - 3
>
>Swedes are very polite guests. They show much appreciation for the food.
>They guess the ingredients, enquire how it was cooked, wonder where the
>ingredients were bought and ask how long it needed in the oven. In fact,
>most guests ask for the recipe and this is the greatest of compliments. They
>eat and mutter 'This was good' which is rather strange as they are still
>eating it.
>
>At the restaurant - 1

>
>You are forced to hang up your coat when entering a restaurant as it is
>infested with all sorts of harmful bacteria. For this pleasure you are
>expected to pay. Why should you pay? To pay the cloakroom attendant. Why
>have a cloakroom attendant? If they didn't there'd be no-one to take your 15
>crowns. Get it?
>
>At the restaurant - 2
>
>Swedes believe in fairness. No-one should be in debt to anyone else.
>Consequently they insist on all paying their fair share at the restaurant
>when the bill comes. Who had what and how much takes forever to work out and
>is not made easier by the fact that nobody at that stage has a clear head.
>Lenghty calculations on a serviette and countless restarts later, they've
>worked out how much each person owes down to the last krona. This is when
>several in the group realize they need to take out an instant bank loan.
>
>Swedish alcohol policy
>
>The Swedes do have an alcohol problem. It's so expensive that no-one can
>afford it. How can anyone afford to get drunk, let alone become an
>alcoholic? The 'Systembolaget' (the system company) is the national retail
>monopoly which displays wine and beer behind locked glass cases. If you
>really must buy the horrid stronger stuff, then it's safely stacked away on
>shelves behind the counter. No wonder Swedes think it's an exciting
>adventure to go into a bright, open, welcoming tax-free shop at the airport
>where they are trusted to pick up a bottle of booze and not drink it before
>reaching the check-out.
>
>Wine
>

>How do you ask for something if you can't pronounce it? To help Swedes get
>their tongues around strange foreign names once they reach the counter, the
>Systembolaget's brochure used to contain the phonetic pronunciation of all
>the wines on sale. Coteaux de Langedoc became something like kåta de
>långödock which doesn't look at all drinkable. Today, as fully fledged
>members of the EU and therefore full-blooded Europeans, Swedes have to
>manage without this customer-friendly linguistic help. Mind you, if you ask
>for a Californian wine in fluent English, the chances are the assistant
>won't understand. They need a Swedish accent.
>
>Beer
>
>Beer in Sweden is classified into four types according to alcohol content.
>This is perhaps best explained by a Swedish business man in a Stockholm
>restaurant who had just been told by his Japanese guests that they would
>like to drink beer with their meal.
>
>'In Sweden we have beer with different classes. You can have a 'lätt öl'
>which is a light, easy beer with no alcohol. You can even drink it at lunch
>time. Then you can have a 'people's beer', a folköl, and if you want you can
>buy that in shops. We also have in Sweden a mellanöl which is a
>'middle-class beer'. Yes and then you have another one, a class 3 one too.
>This is a big, strong one but you have to go to the system company to get
>it. But not on Sundays.' I think they then asked for mineral water.
>
>Snaps
>
>If you want to get the Swedes singing then open a bottle of ice-cold snaps -
>which is the Swedish word for schnapps. Swedes drink snaps, flavoured with

>caraway, aniseed, coriander, fennel and wormwood, with herring (of course)

>and crayfish.

>

>You'll please them no end if you, too, were to join in the singing of a

>'snapsvisa' (a song which accompanies schnapps).

>

>Here is an English transcription of one of the most famous songs.

Grab a

>Swede and sing along. Skål!

>

>Hell and gore

>

>Chung hop father Allan Allan lay

>

>Hell and gore

>

>Chung hop father Allan lay

>

>Oh handsome inter hell an tar

>

>Hand hell air inter half an four

>

>Hell and gore!

>

>(Now knock it back in one)

>

>Chung hop father Allan lay

>

>

>

>Swedish food

>

>This is delicious. Swedes love anything that is pickled in spice and

>vinegar. You pickle it, they'll eat it. Other tasty delicacies include fried

>salted herring, marinated herring and more pickled herring. Certain dishes

>are associated with particular holidays and times of the year. At Christmas,

>the Swedes eat a Christmas ham which is all very nice. They also eat dried

>stock fish. Believe it or not this is dried fish soaked in lye. (Are your

>mouths watering?). This is followed by cold rice pudding. Yes, you read

>correctly.

>
>Swedes get very excited about the advent of new potatoes. There is nothing
>like a new potato having just been pulled out of the rich fertile soil of
>Scania, southern Sweden. The price per kilo in the first weeks is
>prohibitive but after a while normal Swedes, as they all are of course, can
>afford what they've all been waiting for. Swedish new potatoes are usually
>eaten with chives, sour cream and-yes, you've guessed it, pickled herring.
>
>Once you have tasted pickled herring, salt herring and marinated herring it
>is time to try fermented baltic herring. A specialty from the north, the
>fish is nowadays tinned. The tins become spherical as the fermentation
>continues. To the uninitiated the smell, once the tin has been opened,
>reminds you of....
>
>No wonder there are so many MacDonald hamburger joints in Sweden.
>
>No, seriously. Swedish cooking has opened itself up to all manner
>ofinternational influences which has led to a Swedish culinary miracle.
>Stockholm restaurants can match anything that Parisians can offer. 'Smaklig
>måltid!' which in English means Bon appétit!
>
>The normal Swede
>
>Every Swede should aspire to being normal and average. There's no greater
>compliment than to be called an ordinary kind of person. 'To be as people
>usually are' is a fine way to describe yourself and you'll instantly earn
>others' respect. Successful people are just normal people who have had a
>spot of luck - but it won't last. Every Swede can tell you about
>'Jantelagen' the law of Jante. This states that you shouldn't think you are

>somebody. Somebody who is somebody pretends to be nobody because anybody can
>be nobody and nobody would really want to be seen as somebody in the eyes of
>anybody. Get it?
>
>The honest Swede
>
>Swedes are basically honest. They don't like cheating. That's a foreign
>habit. There are only two occasions when it's acceptable to cheat.
>Joy-riding on the Stockholm underground which is regarded as a kind of
>sport, and filling in your income-tax forms which is regarded a necessity.
>
>The silent Swede
>
>Silence is not necessarily negative. Swedes are marvelously reflective and
>introvert. To sit and say nothing for an hour is good for the soul. Indeed,
>which other nation would sing about the virtues of silence in their national
>anthem? 'Du gamla, du fria, du fjällhöga nord. Du tysta, du glädjrika
>sköna'. (Ye ancient, ye land of the free, the high fells of the north. Ye
>silent, ye glorious beauty).
>
>The Grateful Swede
>
>The Swedes are a very thankful people. They may not have a word for 'please'
>but they more than compensate by using the word 'tack' (thank you) in any
>number of situations. They say 'tack' or 'tack tack'. The reply is 'tack' or
>even 'tack tack'. They say 'tusen tack' if they are particularly grateful
>which is a thousand thank yous, and which in English is multiplied by
>another thousand to become 'thanks a million'. They say 'tack för maten'
>after a meal, which means thank you for the food and they say 'tack för

>senast' meaning thank you your hospitality the last time we met.
They say
>'ja tack' for 'yes please and 'tack själv' for thank you.
>
>The 'lagom bra' Swede or the Swede who is not too good but, then again, not
>so bad either.
>
>The Complete Oxford Dictionary may boast over 650 000 entries to prove that
>English is a very wordy language. Swedish, on the other hand, has a smaller
>vocabulary, but they compensate by having words for which there is no
>English equivalent. Swedes are fond of neither extravagance in any form nor
>excesses (except in liquid form). Which is why they have a word like
>'lagom', meaning 'just enough' and 'with moderation'. Everything can, and
>indeed should be, 'lagom'. What is
>absolutely-fanastic-marvellous-way-out-super-terrific to an American is
>'lagom bra' to a Swede ('Just about right and nothing to make a fuss
>about'). 'Bra' here means 'good' and has nothing to do with lingerie in
>medium size. Doing things in moderation means always taking the middle path.
>If there is a choice between 'ja' and 'nej' the Swedes say 'Nja'. If there
>is heartless capitalism on one hand and mindless socialism on the other, the
>Swedes develop a 'lagom' sort of compromise called the Swedish Muddle or is
>it Model?
>
>The safety-conscious Swede
>
>Swedes need to feel safe and secure in everything they do. They wear knee
>pads, cycle helmets, ear plugs, protective glasses and life-jackets -
>and
>that's when they do the washing up.
>
>Patriotism
>

>Swedes hang Swedish flags on their Christmas trees. Swedes even wipe their
>mouths on the Swedish flag as you'll even find Swedish flags on serviettes
>on special occasions. The Swedish flag appears on birthday cards, Christmas
>cards and playing cards. The Swedish national day is called the day of the
>Swedish flag when you may even find a Swedish flag at the top of a flag-pole.
>In fact the flag is run up on the slightest excuse. They hoist the flag if
>there's a birthday in your family, or indeed in anybody's family. They hoist
>it when they are expecting guests, they hoist it on Sundays and public
>holidays, and on the king's birthday.
>
>They'll hoist it simply because everybody else has hoisted theirs.
>
>Immigrants
>
>Sweden probably has the highest rate of academics in the cleaning business
>and in hotel kitchens. They are all called Hassan and Bogdan. Those looking
>for jobs they are more than well qualified for often change their names to
>more Swedish sounding names. Hassan becomes Hasse and Bogdan becomes Bengt.
>This might at least fool the prospective employer on the application form
>and they may be called to interview. Of a population of just under 9
>million, there are 1 million immigrants. Sales of peroxide are unusually
>high in Sweden.
>
>Nature
>
>The relationship Swedes have with Nature is particularly difficult to
>explain to a foreigner. Swedes are incredibly knowledgeable about plants,
>flowers, animals and creepy-crawlies. They not only know the name of the
>bird, but they can tell you how it sounds in the morning, where it nests and

>from whence it has migrated. Such is their worship of nature, that it is
>reflected in their family names. Wouldn't you like to be called 'Aspengrove'
>(Asplund), 'Lillyleaf' (Liljeblad), 'Flowertwig' (Blomqvist) and 'Mountain
>stream' (Beergström)'
>
>Religion
>
>Swedes gave up being Catholics years ago and adopted Lutheranism. However,
>always keen on having any excuse not to work, they kept the Catholic holy
>days and made them holidays; Twelfth Night, All Saints Day, Ascension Day.
>Twelfth night is logically called 'The eve of the thirteenth day' in
>Swedish. All Saints Day is nowadays translated as 'Halloween' with a
Swedish
>accent, and Ascension Day was once translated by a Swede as 'The
day Jesus
>took a flight to heaven'.
>
>Crime and punishment
>
>Major criminals like those omitting to file their income tax returns or
>forgetting to pay their bills on time are dealt with severely. Minor
>criminals like murderers and those convicted of grievous bodily harm are
>told not to do it again.
>
>Swedish Television
>
>God may be watching you. But I doubt whether he watches Swedish television.
>At prime viewing time Swedish television tells you that everything is
>dangerous to your health. Don't eat this Don't drink that, don't do that
>either. However, the death rate in Sweden is still 100%.
>
>Most of the money from the television license goes towards staging the
>Eurovision Song Contest which Sweden insist on winning every third year.
>
>Sport

>
>Swedes excel at sports. There is a nation-wide interest in sports, exercise
>and outdoor recreation. There are over 22 000 officially registered sports
>clubs, not taking into account the thousands of local clubs, including those
>at workplaces. Swedes are justly proud of their famous sportsmen and women -
>Björn Borg, Ingemar Stenmark, Ingemar Johansson, Annika Sörenstam to name
>but a few.
>
>Their ice-hockey players are so good that most of them have been sold and
>exported to major teams in the NHL. Swedes are frequently world champions in
>bandy. Then again, it's relatively easy to be world champions in a game
>nobody else has ever heard of.
>
>Swedish sex and sin
>
>There isn't any.
>
>Vacation
>
>Swedes take the whole summer off work. They have five weeks paid leave which
>they usually take in July. Once a Swede was told he had only five weeks to
>live. 'I hope it's in July' he said.
>
>Public holidays
>
>Yes, Sweden has its fair share. But they are not enough. 'Swedes are world
>best' (one of their favorite phrases) at finding excuses for not being at
>work. They created the 'squeeze day', explained once by a Swede as 'a day
>squeezed in between a holiday and a weekend. We have worked for it, so it's
>not a free day really'. Translated this means that if there is a public
>holiday on, say, the Thursday then they don't think it's worth going into

>work just for one day before they're off again at the weekend. The Friday,
>in this case, is a squeeze day. They accumulate time by working four minutes
>extra every day so they reckon it's not a holiday but time off in lieu of
>the overtime. Get it?
>
>If they are lucky, the Swedes can enjoy what can only be described as a
>'squeeze week' during the first week of May. There's the weekend, then a
>squeeze Monday as Tuesday is the 1st of May and a public holiday. Hopefully
>Ascension Day falls on the Thursday so it's no good going to work on the
>Wednesday and the Friday is squeezed between Thursday and Saturday and
>before you know it it's already the following weekend.
>
>Some Swedish traditional holidays
>
>1. Valborgsmässoafton (Walpurgis night)
>
>This is the evening before the 1st of May public holiday. A metamorphosis
>occurs. Like a butterfly emerging from months of lonely darkness in its
>cocoon, Swedes wriggle out into the open, stretch and flap their wings. The
>winter is officially over, at least according to the calendar, by gathering
>outdoors and lighting huge bonfires. From now on, Swedes shed their thick,
>cozy winter attire and put on flimsy, brightly-colored, cotton summer wear.
>If the Jews are God's chosen people, then on this night the Swedes are God's
>frozen people. Wind, rain, hail and snow abound, so quite often the bonfires
>don't have a long life-span. The Swedish calendar is not always in tune with
>reality.
>
>2. Midsummer
>

>This is celebrated on the weekend coming closest to the real
midsummer day,
>24th of June. A mass exodus takes place just before with thousands
of Swedes
>evacuating the towns and cities and heading for their weekend
cottages in
>the country. They erect a maypole, erect being the operative word
as in fact
>it is a pagan symbol of fertility. It looks like a long thing with two
round
>dangly bits!
>
>They dress it up in leaves and flowers (the maypole, that is) and then
spend
>the afternoon dancing around it pretending to be small frogs. It's
true.
>
>Swedes eat new potatoes and pickled herring (of course). Before
long, it is
>not only the herring which is pickled as they do end to imbibe large
>quantities of beer and akvavit. No wonder they dance like frogs
afterwards.
>Another important dish on the menu is fresh strawberries and
cream. No
>foreign watery, tasteless EU-regulated strawberries, but large,
curvy,
>juicy, sweet Swedish ones.
>
>Lucia, 13th of December
>
>Most people have no idea how the Lutheran Swedes came to
celebrate the
>Sicilian Saint Lucia when even the Sicilians Don't pay her any
attention
>whatsoever. In Swedish homes, hospitals, old-people's homes,
factories and
>offices and up the High street, Lucia comes to spread light in the
deep
>winter darkness - usually long before dawn, which at this time of
year is
>just before it gets dark again. Little blonde girls, teenage blond girls
and
>not-so-young-any-more blonde Maj-Britt who works in the
accounting
>department, dress up in a full length, white gown with a red ribbon
around

>their waist and become this year's Lucia. Lucia wears a wreath of
>lingonberry sprigs on her head and positioned in the wreath are
several lit
>candles. As only one can be Lucia in each procession, the other less
>fortunate dark-haired girls have to walk behind her acting as some
kind of
>bridesmaid. As Sweden is an extremely egalitarian society, boys (or
Per from
>the purchasing department) are invited to take part in the
procession as
>'star boys'. Lucia's henchmen, sort of.
>
>This festival is typically and uniquely Swedish and the song,
surprisingly
>entitled 'Sankta Lucia', sung by Lucia and her back up group, brings
tears
>to everyone's eyes. As indeed it should.
>
>The Right of Common Access
>
>Swedes can be proud of many things. ABBA, tennis players and a
variety of
>pickled herring. One thing that every Swede cherishes very dearly is
the
>right to roam wherever he wishes on open land and to pick flowers,
berries
>and mushrooms in forests and fields and to go swimming and
boating in lakes
>and the sea. You are not allowed to pitch your tent in someone's
back garden
>and you are not allowed to pick flowers from someone's flower beds.
Likewise
>you are not allowed to climb over any fence enclosing a private
home and you
>are certainly not allowed to take growing trees, bushes, bark,
leaves,
>acorns or nuts. However, the right of common access does allow you
to swat
>as many swarms of mosquitoes as is humanly possible - for the
common good.
>
>Swedish small talk
>
>Swedes call this 'cold talk' or 'dead talk' which more or less sums up
their
>opinion of it. Not being first in the queue when God dished out

> conversational talent, Swedes limit themselves to one major topic of
> conversation - the weather. Sweden is so large that it has all kinds of
> weather at once which is very convenient as there is always
something to
> talk about.
>
> Swedish conversation
>
> When Swedes say something, they mean exactly what they say. No
more, no
> less. There is usually no hidden meaning and they don't have to read
between
> the lines. There are few fantastic metaphores in daily conversation,
and
> exaggeration, a string of vivid adjectives and enhancing repetitions
are
> often viewed with suspicion. Try retelling something that happened
and
> embroider a little to make the story more stimulating. After a while
the
> Swede will correct you as your version is beginning to stray from
what
> really happened. 'And then there were loads of people who', 'There
were five
> people' says Sven. 'And then after half an hour they came and', '20
minutes'
> says Sven 'They came after 20 minutes'. Elaborate story-telling has
never
> been possible in Sweden
>
> Swedes are extremely good listeners. Sometimes it's difficult to tell
> whether they are thinking about what you said or if they have
mentally gone
> to lunch - but they are listening to every word. The marvelous thing
is they
> don't interrupt. Interrupting is a sign of bad manners. They patiently
wait
> for their turn to express themselves concisely and precisely.
Sometime they
> have to wait for rather a long time. Especially when meeting with
> foreigners.
>
> Swedish women sometimes sound as if they have a breathing
complaint. When
> they agree, they breathe in and say 'jahhhh'. Or they inhale and say

>'nejhhhh'. They are not about to pass out in an asthma attack. They are just
>participating in the conversation.
>
>Swedes have a tendency to state the obvious. If you meet an acquaintance in
>a shop he'll probably say 'Oh, so you're out shopping'. Or, if you meet
>somebody you know out strolling in the countryside he'll say 'Oh, so you're
>out walking'. The temptation is to say 'No, I'm playing the piano' but
>don't. Sarcasm doesn't go down too well.
>
>Swedish discussion
>
>Being neutral and avoiders of conflict, the Swedes are careful not to
>express an opinion which may cause heated discussion. Ask a Swede what his
>opinion is he'll probably answer 'It depends'. He won't actually tell you
>what it depends on as that might lead to a debate and then you have to take
>sides. Hundreds of years of neutrality has taught him not to take sides -
>well at least not until he knows who's going to win.
>
>The Swedish language
>
>'Hej' - the word for hello and good-bye is the same. It's difficult to know
>whether people are coming or going.
>
>'Gift' - the word for married is the same word as for poison. This probably
>could explain the high divorce rate.
>
>'Sex' - the word for six is the same for sex, which gives a 'six-pack' a
>whole new meaning.
>
>'Oväder' - the word for stormy weather is, literally translated,
>'unweather'. And I would have thought it was very much weather.
>
>'Sambo' - you live and sleep together with your partner but are not married,
>well at least not to that particular partner.
>

>'Särbo' - you sleep with your partner and then go home to your own bed

>afterwards.

>

>'A-laget' - in Swedish, the 'A-team' is a group of hopeless alcoholics

>hanging outside the state liquor store. Not the kind you'd want in the

>national basketball team in other words.

>

>'Osvensk' - the word 'un-Swedish' mostly has a positive connotation!

A

>recent book review stated 'It's an exciting thriller, entertaining, has

>colorful characters, lots of action and imagination and very un-Swedish to

>name but a few positive qualities'.

>

>It's unbelievable, but true! Can you imagine a Frenchman using the word

>'un-French' as a positive quality?

>

>Swedish English (Swenglish)

>

>Although the Swedes generally have a very good command of the english

>language, sometimes they just don't get it right.

>

>'Please take off your clothes and follow me to the whip room.'

>

>(Translation: May I take your coat and accompany you to the VIP room)

>

>'She's away with the VD.'

>

>(Translation: She's away with the Managing Director) (VD =Managing Director)

>

>'His name is Öberg, a zero with two pricks.'

>

>(Translation: The letter 'o' with two dots = ö) (prickar = dots)

>

>You'll have to show your leg before entering'

>

>(Translation: You'll have to show identification before entering.) (leg

=

>id)

>

>'Please keep hanging on the line'
>
>(Translation: Please continue to hold the line)
>
>'Thank you for the last time'
>
>(Translation: Thank you for your hospitality.)
>
>'Can I follow you to the big mess in Stockholm?'
>
>(Translation: May I come with you to the large fair in Stockholm?)
(mässa =
>fair)
>
>'He has many balls up in the air'
>
>(Translation: He is involved in many different projects.) (att ha bollar
i
>luften = Swedish saying)
>
>A lesson in Swedish
>
>The Swede is a person of few words.
>
>Eng: Excuse me, I didn't quite catch what you were saying.
>
>Swe: Va? (vah?) Literal translation: What?
>
>Eng: Sorry for bumping into you like that. So terribly clumsy of me.
>
>Swe: Oj! (oi!) Literal translation: Oh!
>
>Eng: It's you! How lovely to see you!
>
>Swe: Nej, men! (nay men) Literal translation: No, but!
>
>Eng: How are things with you?
>
>Swe: Annars? (an ass) Literal translation: Otherwise?
>
>Eng: Excuse me, may I disturb you for a second?
>
>Swe: Du Literal translation: You
>
>Eng: Could I have a pint of your best bitter please.
>

>Swe: En stor stark Literal translation: A big strong one
>
> Eng: Shall we treat ourselves and indulge in a schnapps?
>
>Swe: En liten djävul? (en liten yayvull) Literal translation: A little
>devil?
>
>However sometimes English is just that bit more concise:
>
>Eng: Mind the gap!
>
>Swe: Tänk på avståndet mellan vagn och plattform när ni stiger av.
>
>Literal translation: Think of the gap between the carriage and the
plattform
>when you alight.
>
>-----Original Message-----